

GETTING TO KNOW THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

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FM ALEXANDER AND HIS DISCOVERY

- FM Alexander (1869-1955) was an actor who lost his voice and self-diagnosed his cure
- He determined that ingrained habitual postural responses caused his problems
- Realized that stopping the habit of contracting his structure was the first step
- Concluded that tendencies toward holding himself “down” and “in” had to be replaced with a conscious decision to direct his structure forward, upward and outward.
- Began to teach others the importance of breathing in the redirection of internal energies



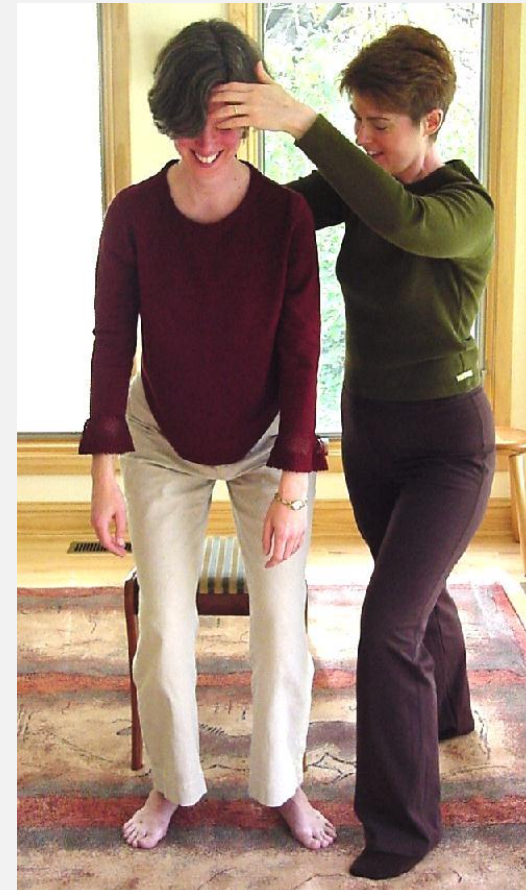
HOW DOES ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE WORK

- Alexander believed that the imbalance of the head on the spine caused significant disturbance to the rest of the body
- He noted that people lost awareness; their internal sense of themselves in space became poorly etched in their nervous system (“body map”)
- Taught that awareness of faulty programming and the allowing of natural balance created freedom from discomfort and more internal space.



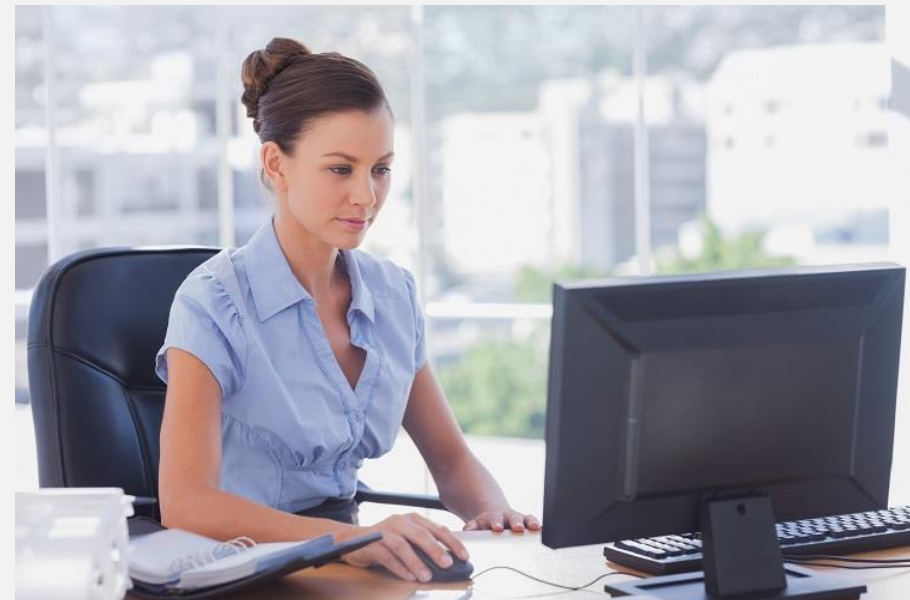
WHAT HAPPENS AT AN ALEXANDER SESSION

- Teacher uses guided movement to assess over-contraction of unnecessary muscles
- Advises students to “leave themselves alone” to allow ancestral postural reflexes to do the work of organizing
- Student learns to allow intrinsic energy patterns to flow, i.e. spinal energy runs up, pectoral energy runs wide, etc.
- Student learns that a sufficient exhale is fundamental to optimal balance and efficiency



WHO COMES TO ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

- Computers and texting have created an epidemic of poor posture and use
- Students range from 13 to 89 years old
- Anyone who can sit down and stand up with some degree of ease, although lying down is another option
- People in discomfort who use their bodies in challenging ways, including sitting too long, lifting and bending, holding an instrument, etc.



HAS ALEXANDER BEEN SCIENTIFICALLY VALIDATED?

- Study reported in British Medical Journal, Aug. 19, 2008, randomized trial with 579 patients reporting low back pain
- One year later, compared to massage and physical therapy, 24 Alexander lessons provided the longest lasting and highest rating of well-being
- 1973 Nobel Laureate physiologist and biologist Nicolas Tinbergen surprised his Nobel audience by talking extensively about FM Alexander
- Currently offered and being studied at the Mayo Clinic
- Famous practitioners include writers GB Shaw and Aldous Huxley, philosopher John Dewey, and countless performing artists

THE BENEFITS OF ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

- Pain alleviation in torso and limbs
- Breathing re-education for respiratory issues; relief from chronic headache
- Greater calm and equanimity, more positive mood
- Greater sense of mastery and control over one's self
- Deeper understanding of the workings of the musculo-skeletal system
- Enhanced performance



LOGISTICS OF ALEXANDER STUDY

- Private lessons available from a number of teachers here in Ann Arbor
- Lessons are usually weekly, either 45 minutes or one hour in duration, but many study every-other-week due to expense
- Cost is anywhere from \$50 to \$80 per session, out-of-pocket
- Duration of lessons can vary. 16 lessons suggested as a minimum
- Many come to Alexander lessons after physical therapy, chiropractic, Pilates, yoga and other attempts at pain relief have failed
- Track record of being very effective as a way to learn how to let go of chronic tension
- Contact me with questions: mobrecht@umich.edu

A BETTER WAY TO LIVE YOUR LIFE

